

**DISTRICTING COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2012, 5:30 P.M.  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR  
CITY HALL BUILDING, 2 CIVIC CENTER PLAZA**

**REVISED**

***Members Present: 7***

*Chair Gene Finke, John Karlsruher, David Thackston, Oscar Silva (5:46 p.m., 7:00 p.m.), Rudy Troncoso (5:50 p.m.), James L. Graham, Alisa Jorgensen*

***Members Absent: 2***

*Vice-Chair Francisco X. Dominguez, Gilbert A. Mendez, Jr.*

***Vacancies: 0***

***Planning and Economic Development Staff:***

*David Coronado, Executive Secretary, Lead Planner; Mariano Soto, Planner, GIS; Marissa Monroy, Economic Development Coordinator*

***Others Present:***

*Marie Taylor, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office*

**1. Meeting Called to Order**

Chair Finke called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. Establish Quorum**

Quorum established.

**3. Discussion and action on:**

- a. Approval of Minutes: February 22, 2012 Meeting

Chair Finke asked Commissioners for a motion to approve the minutes of February 22, 2012.

***MOTION:***

*Motion made by Commissioner Thackston, seconded by Commissioner Graham TO APPROVE.*

## DISCUSSION ON FEBRUARY 22, 2012 MINUTES

1. Chair Finke referred to page 8 of 19 and asked Commissioner Graham if he and Vice-Chair Dominguez had discussed the issue further:

*Vice-Chair Dominguez thought drawing the lines in a north/south configuration is more in keeping with the interests of District 2*

*Commissioner Graham explained the east/west orientation addresses those because the I-10 becomes the boundary, the I-10 being the most readily definable geographic boundary we have in the city. Additionally, the east/west configuration accidentally lends itself to future growth. For those reasons, Commissioner Graham believes the east/west configuration is in the best interests for El Paso, long term.*

Commissioner Thackston clarified Vice-Chair Dominguez was talking about the north/south configuration of District 2. Furthermore, Commissioner Graham was talking about the east/west configuration of Districts 6 and 7.

In response to Commissioner Thackston's comments, Commissioner Graham stated he believed that was the proper context.

2. Chair Finke referred to page 10 of 19 of the Minutes and asked Commissioners Jorgensen and Karlsruher if they had met with Planning Staff to create a new map:

Commissioner Karlsruher responded he and Commissioner Jorgensen would brief Commissioners on the CD-4 map they submitted at the appropriate time.

3. Chair Finke referred to page 11 of 19 of the Minutes regarding confirmation of the term limits for Council representatives:

Ms. Taylor confirmed that City Representatives cannot serve more than 10 years, the same as what was presented in the minutes.

4. Chair Finke referred to page 15 of 19 of the Minutes and asked Mr. Coronado when he thought the last Districting Commission meeting might be:

Mr. Coronado explained there are two scheduled meetings in April, April 4<sup>th</sup> and April 18<sup>th</sup>. If necessary, Staff could schedule an additional meeting; however, the goal is to present two maps to City Council the first or second week in June, 2012. Staff needs time to prepare packets for City Council.

Chair Finke asked if Commissioners had any additions, corrections or revisions. There being none.

**MOTION:**

*Motion made by Commissioner Thackston, seconded by Commissioner Graham AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE.*

**ABSTAIN:** Commissioner Troncoso

Motion passed. (6-0)

b. Drafting and selection of Districting Plans

**UPDATE – STATUS OF COUNTY PRECINCT MAP**

Prior to the presenting of new maps, Mr. Coronado explained City Staff conferred with County Elections Official, Javier Chacón, last week and this week. Mr. Chacón will be presenting the first draft of the new Precinct lines, approved by San Antonio Judges, to County Commissioners at either the March 12<sup>th</sup> or March 19<sup>th</sup> El Paso County Commissioners meeting. Assuming County Commissioners approve the new map, Mr. Chacón will then submit a new packet to the Department of Justice (DOJ) before March 20<sup>th</sup>. Once County Commissioners approve the new map, City Staff will request the new information from Mr. Chacón. Mr. Chacón had noted most of the changes occur in the Northeast and Northwest areas of El Paso.

Commissioner Thackston noted that the State House of Representatives lines divide some Precincts. Commissioner Thackston did not think the changes would impact the maps Commissioners have reviewed thus far.

**PRESENTATION OF NEW MAPS**

**CD-4 – COMMISSIONERS KARLSRUHER AND JORGENSEN**

Mr. Coronado explained the CD-4 map was created by Commissioners Karlsruher and Jorgensen. Mr. Coronado elaborated on the boundary line and Precinct changes. CD-4 deviation is 5.4%

Commissioner Karlsruher stated that he, Commissioner Jorgensen and Staff created the map based on the input received at the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Looking only at the current boundaries between Districts 8 and 1, Commissioners Jorgensen and Karlsruher mutually agreed to only make changes that would minimally affect the other Districts. Their intent was to disrupt as little as possible, the Central, East Central, Eastside and the Valley while looking at areas that are common between Districts 1 and 8.

Commissioner Jorgensen concurred.

**CD-5 – COMMISSIONER GRAHAM**

Mr. Coronado explained the CD-5 map was created by Commissioner Graham. Mr. Coronado elaborated on the boundary line and Precinct changes. CD-5 deviation is 5.4%

Rather than comment on his map at this time, Commissioner Graham suggested that after the presentation of maps, Commissioners could discuss the similarities and differences of the maps.

#### **CD-6 – COMMISSIONER THACKSTON**

Mr. Coronado explained the ~~CD-5~~ CD-6 map was created by Commissioner Thackston. Mr. Coronado elaborated on the boundary line and Precinct changes. CD-6 deviation is 5.8%

#### **PD-11 – MR. ALFREDO LONGORIA**

Mr. Coronado explained the ~~CD-5~~ PD-11 map was created by Mr. Alfredo Longoria. Mr. Coronado elaborated on the boundary line and Precinct changes. PD-11 deviation is 6.3%

#### **MODIFY AGENDA ITEMS – CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Commissioner Graham noted the Call for Public Comment has traditionally been the last item before adjournment. He felt that, at some times, Commissioners were somewhat disadvantaged to have gone through our own discussions and interchanges before the public comment. Likewise, the public had been somewhat disadvantaged to come in after Commissioners' discussion. He asked Commissioners if they would consider allowing the members of the public to speak before Commissioners discuss the new maps.

Chair Finke thought Commissioners have discretion to set the agenda, within reason. If a majority of Commissioners feel the proposal is reasonable, that is what they will do. In the objective of the meetings is to have this process as open to the public as possible.

Chair Finke requested to modify the agenda to:

1. Leave Item 4. **Call for Public Comment** as is
2. Renumber Item 5. **Commissioner's Discussion Post Public Comment**
3. Add Item 6. **Adjournment**.

Ms. Taylor explained that, as Presiding Officer of the Commission, the Chair could call whatever items in whatever order.

Chair Finke then asked Commissioners to call for the reordering the items. Chair Finke called for a vote on the motion proposed by Commissioner Graham. All Ayes. Motion passed.

#### **4. Call for Public Comment**

Prior to receiving the public comment, Chair Finke remarked that whether or not Commissioners agree or disagree with these maps, it is important that Commissioners

recognize the time and effort that Commissioners, Staff and members of the public have devoted in developing these maps. It is not an easy task. It takes time away from our businesses, recreational activities and other activities we do in our lives. Chair Finke appreciated everyone's participation.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Mr. Ray Mancera, representing the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), introduced Mr. Joe Gutierrez, LULAC Redistricting Committee. Mr. Mancera explained the PD-10 map was created on behalf of LULAC in corroboration with the Mexican American Bar Association (MABA). Mr. Mancera received an email from the MABA representative explaining he would not be able to attend the Districting Commission meeting tonight. Mr. Mancera reiterated, as stated at the previous Districting Commission meeting, LULAC and MABA urged the Commissioners to support the PD-10 map, for various reasons. One of those reasons being the PD-10 map has the lowest deviation, 1.1%, of all the Staff, Commissioner and members of the public maps.

Chair Finke remembered there had been a map submitted for review with a 1.0% deviation total.

Mr. Coronado clarified there is no such map with a 1.0% deviation total.

Mr. Mancera clarified the PD-10 map has the lowest deviation total of 1.1%. He explained this week the San Antonio Federal Court agreed with the Latino Task Force that included LULAC, MABA and other Latino organizations and they had accepted the decision of the court. LULAC has been at the forefront ensuring that the rights of minorities are protected when it comes to voting. Before LULAC stepped forward and took that responsibility, they attended many of the public meetings, at City Hall and in the community. Before drafting PD-10 map, Mr. Mancera met with many of the Neighborhood Associations. LULAC felt obligated to submit a draft map because of the vast deviation between the various Districts, specifically District 5. On behalf of LULAC and MABA, Mr. Mancera kindly urged Commissioners to submit the PD-10 map as one of the draft maps recommended to City Council.

Commissioner Graham thanked Mr. Mancera for being a part of the process. Commissioner Graham noted Mr. Mancera has attended most, if not all, of the Districting Commission meetings and that Mr. Mancera has always had constructive comment. Commissioner Graham was not, by any means, cross-examining Mr. Mancera with regard to the PD-10 map but Commissioner Graham was confused. Commissioner Graham explained, with regard to the PD-10 map as it pertains to Districts 5, 6, and 7, the eastern most Districts within the City. Commissioner Graham explained he would be reading into the record Mr. Mancera's comments from the November 30<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes then clarify the context of that comment as the Commissioner understood it. Commissioner Graham read the following into the record:

*"Mr. Ray Mancera, representing LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), commented on the meeting time change. Mr. Mancera requested Commissioners not revert to old Draft Plans (SD-1) as this will create confusion; however, he (Mr. Mancera) felt that CD-1a, CD-1b and CD-5 were moving in the right direction.*

Commissioner Graham explained all three maps referred to by Mr. Mancera were quite different in their orientation pertaining to Districts 5, 6, and 7, the eastern most Districts.

*He (Mr. Mancera) had full confidence that Commissioners will do what is right and fair for the citizenry of El Paso, independent of City Council Representative. He (Mr. Mancera) congratulated Commissioner Graham on creating Draft Plan SD-5 (CD-1) and noted that the numbers are coming down."*

Commissioner Graham was in a bit of a quandary as to what happened; the direction that he (Mr. Mancera) liked suddenly was not present in the PD-10 map. He asked Mr. Mancera to explain what happened or is maybe that just not something that was not addressed in the PD-10 map.

For the record, Mr. Mancera responded he did state those comments read by the Commissioner. That was one the first meetings where the members of the public got to see those maps. Mr. Mancera was very impressed that Commissioners were "thinking outside of the box". Mr. Mancera stated Commissioners had what is called a "starburst effect", this west to east configuration in a parallel drawing. Having Alameda or North Loop south of that was District 6, north of that was District 5 up to Montwood then District 5 would take the north side, everything going out in a starburst. Mr. Mancera stated that after hearing public input, after having gone to so many meetings, he came to realize the PD-10 map was more in line with the public wishes and more in line with the demographics. Even though Mr. Mancera felt that it was a fairly unique way in designing those new Districts, he felt in the best interest of the public in general it was best to draw those Districts in this way [as represented in the PD-10 map].

Commissioner Jorgensen thanked Mr. Mancera for all the work he has done and the time he has put into the Commission meetings, creating his map and the work of LULAC. Commissioner Jorgensen questioned Mr. Mancera regarding the changes to Districts 1 and 8. Commissioner Jorgensen stated that both City Council Representatives Lilly and Niland are moved out of their Districts [in the PD-10 map]. Commissioner Jorgensen felt that was a weakness with that map. She stated that the Kern Area Neighborhood Association has very strongly voiced their opinion that the Kern Area should remain in District 1. Commissioner Jorgensen was concerned that, as a new City Council Representative, Representative Niland would be moved out of her District when she is one year into a three [sic] year term and be ineligible for re-election, should she and the voters so choose.

In response, Mr. Mancera explained that at the very first Districting Commission meeting, he disagreed with the mandate and voiced his opposition that “no cow is sacred”. Mr. Mancera stated that the Commission should not try and protect the residency of the incumbents. It was his opinion that Commissioners should be removed from politics, from everything, and if/when the boundaries were drawn and some City Council Representatives happen to now fall out of that original District, so be it. Secondly, for Districts 1 and 8, his group felt that having two lines running north and south, parallel going south, was best. When somebody says, “I represent the west side” it would be easy to distinguish which Representative that was. In looking at District 1 [in the PD-10 map] there would never be a question as to who is the west side Representative. [In PD-10], his group tried to make District 8 to be more in conjunction with the Downtown, the Mission Mills, Sunset Heights, all that area because they are more in line with each other than being so stretched out like a “chorizo” which Mr. Mancera felt was inappropriate. It has crossed his mind many times keeping the Willows area [in PD-10] but, Mr. Mancera felt that the City Council Representative, would be safe because she is newly elected and would be able to serve her term. Mr. Mancera noted that the two City Council Representative’s (for Districts 1 and 8) terms would expire at the same time. Additionally, the District 8 City Council Representative could very well run for re-election, all you have to do is change the District number.

Mr. Coronado clarified, in the PD-10 map, the Representative for District 1 would reside in District 8.

Chair Finke asked Ms. Taylor if there was a City rule that would enable two City Council Representatives to swap District numbers.

Ms. Taylor explained they would not swap numbers. Ms. Taylor stated that the way the Districts are laid out now [in PD-10], they overlapped District 1 and District 2’s current boundaries.

Chair Finke interjected what we would be looking at is two City Council Representatives who currently represent Districts which are identified by specific numbers; Representative Lilly represents District 1 and Representative Niland represents District 8. Hypothetically speaking, should this PD-10 map become the new redistricting map, what would prevent City Council Representative Lilly from representing District 8 and City Council Representative Niland representing District 1.

Ms. Taylor explained, as we have discussed previously, the City Council Representatives would serve out their term, although they would not reside in that District.

Chair Finke continued the disadvantage for City Council Representative Niland is that she would not be able to run in a District that had the same number as she ran in before. It would not make any difference for City Council Representative Lilly as she has met her term limit.



Commissioner Thackston noted Commissioners talked about this at the last meeting, the District numbers do not have any significance whatsoever. Commissioners can change the District numbers, as long as we have eight Districts and the City Council Representative lives in that District.

Chair Finke responded he does see a consequence. A City Council Representative runs for office representing a certain constituency, if you change the nature of that constituency very significantly that may affect the City Council Representative's opportunity for re-election.

Commissioner Jorgensen interjected one of the principles that the Commission has been charged with is not to churn the core of the District. Commissioner Jorgensen commented that, as invested as the Commission and the public are in these maps; the Commission is a body to recommend maps to City Council and it is City Council who will make the final decision. At the end of City Council Representative Lilly's term, she would have been an advocate for District 1 for 10 years. What we are talking about is the careers of City Council Representatives who have been devoted to serving the public. Similarly with Representative Niland and what the Representative is trying to accomplish in District 8, and for the city at large. Commissioner Jorgensen wanted to be cognizant and respect that.

Ms. Taylor clarified, and reminded Commissioners of past discussions on the matter; part of the Commissioner's charge is to preserve the existing core of each District. It is up to the Commissioners to determine what that core is for each of these Districts.

2. Dr. Karina Ramirez, resident of District 7 south of the freeway, spoke to the Commission. She believes that the majority of residents of Districts 6 and 7, south of the freeway, would favor the PD-2, PD-3, PD-4, PD-5 and PD-10 maps, which maintain the boundaries north/south of the freeway. Dr. Ramirez read from a prepared statement as she explained the reasons for this preference. The area known as the Lower Valley or Ysleta is not, as one of your members was heard to say, just Mexico coming north. This could not be farther from the truth. The people of Ysleta were doing just fine until the City of El Paso annexed, against the wishes of the people, in 1954. We were promised everything, but we were given nothing. Nothing except tax bills for services and amenities we never, ever received. For most of this time our Districts ran east and west and we were treated like the stepsister whom no one wanted to recognize even though the demographics; ethnically, economically and educationally are the same on both sides of the freeway. For almost 50 years we were ignored by the rest of the City except when it served the interests of a particular Representative that we might have had at the time. It was not until the District maps were redrawn, not all that long ago with Districts 6 and 7 running north and south of the freeway, that we have received any attention at all. We have actually gotten a few sidewalks and sewers and some drainage, wow; we would like to keep it that. As Dr. Ramirez looked at maps CD-1b, CD-4 and CD-5, several of them, she can see a mentality of Selma, Alabama coming



west and the mentality of Phoenix, Arizona coming east. By remapping our two Districts into one single east/west District you would be setting us back 50 years and setting us apart from the rest of El Paso once again. It is a climate which we view with both disdain and trepidation. She thanked Commissioners for their kind attention.

Chair Finke thanked Dr. Ramirez and asked if any Commissioners had any questions for Dr. Ramirez. No questions from Commissioners at this time.

3. Dr. Richard Teschner, a District 1 resident, continued to support the plan he submitted, PD-5; and congratulated Commissioner Graham on the map he recently submitted, CD-5. Dr. Teschner stated he likes both these maps because both maps keep the Rim Area, Kern Place and Mission Hills in District 1, where they have always been. They are at the heart of the old west side. He mentioned that, in one sense, Commissioner Graham's map was superior to his. Commissioner Graham's map makes District 1 a lot more diverse, ethnically and socio-economically. Under Commissioner Graham's map, all of Downtown, Segundo Barrio, Chamizal and Cinco Puntos (Five Points) are now in District 1. This creates a lot of diversity that District 1 has not had previously and affords an opportunity for the under-represented, meaning the Downtown area, to be represented along with everyone else in District 1. Dr. Teschner continues to support his plan, PD-5; and Commissioner Graham's plan, SD-5.

#### MARK BENITEZ' WRITTEN REMARKS

Dr. Teschner read into the record, a portion of an email sent to Dr. Teschner from Mr. Mark Benitez, President, Cielo Vista Neighborhood Association and Chair, El Paso Neighborhood Coalition Council.

*"I cannot attend tonight's meeting due to a commitment with the Leadership Academy graduation sponsored by Neighborhood Services. The following will detail my support for map CD-5 which I understand Commissioner Graham designed. I have been a part of this process having attended some of the Commission meetings at City Hall, as well as, the one held at the Cielo Vista Library on February 7<sup>th</sup>. I voiced my concern that some of the maps, shown and illustrated, that Cielo Vista would be split in two by using Hawkins as the dividing line. Many of the residents voiced their opposition to that design at some of our Neighborhood Association meetings. I asked for support to keep Cielo Vista together which would also help to keep the Association together. In reviewing the above map, CD-5, you (Commissioner Graham) did a wonderful job balancing that for Cielo Vista and District 3. But to my surprise, it shows how you brought balance to all eight Districts. In all the maps I have observed, this map (CD-5) brings that much needed cohesiveness that helps define each District. Thank you so much for your hard work and dedication. This is a great accomplishment. Best wishes, Mark Benitez"*

Between these two maps, Chair Finke stated there is quite a difference on the eastside between the two maps [CD-5 and PD-5].

Mr. Mancera commented that looking at the eastside, they are completely different. Mr. Mancera stated, Mr. Benitez noted both maps protect and take into consideration his request to keep the Cielo Vista area together. Other than that, the two maps differ drastically in their design, CD-5 and PD-5.

Regarding the CD-5 map, Chair Finke noticed the eastside Districts show a north/south configuration. Chair Finke recalled a proposal/discussion that Commissioner Graham put forward, if you have a north/south configuration for Districts 6 and 7 what you do is you disrupt the Tigua neighborhood.

Dr. Ramirez, and others from the audience stated that was not true.

Per the CD-5 map, Chair Finke asked Commissioner Graham to point out where the Tigua neighborhood was located.

Commissioner Graham responded the Tigua Neighborhood location would be at the far south point of District 7; although it is in District 6.

4. Mr. Ed Talamantes, Lower Valley resident for 32 years, respects the rights and wishes of everyone; however, he would like everyone to respect the rights of his District, District 7. Since District 7 joined with the north side of the freeway, they have seen some improvements which before were few and far between. El Paso is a diverse city and that is also one thing they like about their District. District 7 is very diverse and has many interchanges with the north and south people of the District. It would be a shame to split us up, east/west. That was the old syndrome, with the freeway splitting the city; it would be shame to have to go to that. Mr. Talamantes does not care for the CD-5 map, one bit. Three of the four maps just split the city in half, at least their two Districts (Districts 6 and 7). Mr. Talamantes prefers the PD-10 and PD-5 maps. Mr. Talamantes would hate to go back to the "north of the freeway" syndrome; that is not very productive. Mr. Talamantes explained it has taken a long time for people to get used to this configuration they have now and it has worked well. He hoped that Commissioners would look at that, listen to the residents, and respect the wishes of the residents of the District. Mr. Talamantes added the CD-4, CD-5 and CD-11 maps would be terrible choices, at least for District 7. In conclusion, Mr. Talamantes respects all residents of all Districts. We all want the same thing, equal representation, more for our communities. Like Dr. Ramirez stated they are long overdue for some of these improvements.
5. Mr. "Eppy" Martinez, resident of Marion Manor since 1971, likes the way his District (District 7) is and wants to keep it as close to the way it is now. Mr. Martinez explained the District has had some good Representatives in the past; however, they have a great Representative now, City Council Representative Steve Ortega. Representative Ortega has done a lot for his neighborhood; street lights, extensions of curbs, etc. Mr. Martinez asked Commissioners to keep District 7 as close to the way it is now. Mr. Martinez has

not had an opportunity to look at all the maps; however, he respects all residents in all Districts.

Commissioner Silva recalled a public meeting where City Council Representative Holguin stated it would be easier to work with Districts having a north/south configuration. The reason being City Council Representative Holguin could work with constituents residing south of the freeway as opposed to having to be split between interests, because of the diversity. Commissioner Silva asked Dr. Ramirez why the north/south configuration, that we currently have, is preferred over the east/west configuration.

Dr. Ramirez responded that it was favored for the diversity. They were east/west for 54 years almost; it did not work for them. They did not get the kind of representation that they should have gotten. They got the kind of representation that was advantageous for whatever City Council Representative happened to be there at the time. Dr. Ramirez stated, "we don't want to go back to being "south of the tracks", "south of freeway" barrio, so to speak."

Commissioner Silva apologized for not understanding previously.

6. Ms. Minerva Acosta, resident of District 3, noted the District 3 Commissioner, Commissioner Mendez, Jr., was not present again. She stated they continue to support the north/south maps not just because they are so diverse or different because in reality they are not that different. Ms. Acosta stated that what is happening here is that they have been placed in the position where the Commission thinks they know them but, in reality, they don't. They are very different. They have just as many college graduates in their area as they do above the freeway; Dr. Ramirez can confirm that, she has lived in the District for many years. If the Commission thinks that an east/west configuration is the best thing for them, it is not. It may be for Mr. Holguin but he should know better. Ms. Acosta noted that Commissioners keep moving Districts 1 and 8 for various reasons. One reason being given is loss of the continuity, of the people that have been running for office in those two areas. But some maps, particularly map number 5, also disrupts their area but the Commission didn't seem to think the east/west would disrupt them. She asked Commissioners to really refocus on what they are doing to District 3 and what kind of people they are that live in the Valley; they are not all the same. There should be diversity in where we are. There is absolutely no reason why our City Council Representatives can't do that. They should get to know the people that they are supposed to represent. Ms. Acosta was exasperated in Commissioners continuing to support the east/west configuration, continue to move Districts 1 and 8 around, because that seems to be the focus of everything that Commissioners have done. They tried to develop maps that would impact people the least. Whatever you do to Districts 1 and 8 affects all the other Districts. Commissioners keep moving the eastside Districts 5, 6 and 7, and keep moving them further and further to east where they don't belong. Now the Commission is accommodating the Cielo Vista area because, perish the thought; their Neighborhood Association would be cut in half. We weren't even supposed to be

talking about that. Ms. Acosta talked to the Cielo Vista people, at length, after the public meeting. They were upset about the Hawkins division and how it split up the neighborhood especially two Precincts 91 and 92. They told them that they would work with them not to have that split, not because it was a Neighborhood Association but because it was an area line. Commissioners are really not focusing on the people and how the voting is supposed to be and how that voting is supposed to help everybody. The Commission is continuing to mark everything off by doing north of the freeway/south of the freeway which does not represent the people in the Valley. Ms. Acosta asked Commissioners to again, think about what they are doing. Ms. Acosta explained they submitted two maps which are very similar to the map that Mr. Mancera submitted. They told Mr. Mancera that they would work with him, as far as that north/south configuration. Mr. Mancera was very mindful of the Cielo Vista area's response to the Hawkins split but still they considered it a fairly fair map. Ms. Acosta submitted two maps; the PD-2 map and another, both maps show the north/south configuration.

## **5. Commissioners' Discussion on Districting Plans.**

### **CD-6 MAP – COMMISSIONER THACKSTON**

Commissioner Thackston explained there has not been much discussion regarding the map he submitted, CD-6. It turned out that Commissioner Graham and he were thinking along the same lines regarding; Districts 1 and 8, bringing District 1 down into the Downtown area and taking District 8 further up north on the west side. Two things that accomplishes is:

1. It preserves the Kern Place area in District 1;
2. At some of our public meetings, we got some input from some people in District 8 about the discomfort they have had with the seemingly thin line connecting two different parts and that they did not feel represented.

Commissioner Jorgensen interjected that was not District 8; those were not comments from District 8 residents. She believed those comments were from representatives from District 1 at Franklin [High School] Library.

Commissioner Thackston agreed.

Commissioner Jorgensen added there were people at the Armijo Library public meeting that expressed both sides of that argument. They thought District 8 should move further into the Downtown and others who thought District 8 should move out.

Commissioner Thackston explained as it sits right now, City Council Representative Lilly is at the extreme edge of her District and City Council Representative Niland is at the extreme edge of her District. This puts each of them more in the central mix of those Districts. Commissioner Graham had already created his CD-5 map so Commissioner Thackston went with that and progressed eastward. On the eastside, Commissioner

Thackston had an expressed desire to open up three Districts to the eastside but he does not necessarily see the I-10 as the north/south dividing line. Commissioner Thackston heard many comments from District 7 residents who wanted District 7 to cross Alameda, North Loop and the I-10. Commissioner Thackston attempted to accommodate both those concerns by drawing District 7 to stretch all the way down to the Border, crossing at Alameda and opening up to the east. District 6 also crosses the I-10 but not as a north/south configuration nor as a east/west configuration as others. Commissioner Thackston tried to satisfy all expressed thoughts from those public meetings. For District 5, the Commissioner tried to incorporate the southernmost portion of District 5 as a request by the current City Council Representative that that be included in that District. The City Council Representative has stated he has received phone calls from citizens who think that specific area is part of District 5. Commissioner Thackston explained he submitted his map as an alternative to either the east/west or north/south configuration as to how District 7 could be drawn to accommodate both.

#### **CDE-5 MAP – COMMISSIONER GRAHAM**

Commissioner Graham explained his purpose in the division of Districts 1 and 8 was much as Commissioner Thackston stated. That is to have two well divided Districts to rid ourselves of either the suggestion or association of gerrymandering. At one of the public meetings, we did have a City Council Representative call District 8 “gerrymandered”. And while it may have the appearance of gerrymandering, the history of the area does not suggest that and of course, the Department of Justice did approve the Districts 10 years ago. To avoid any suggestion of gerrymandering, the separation of the lower portion, of what is currently the lower portion of District 8, has been moved into District 1 and partly into District 3. That gets the City Council Representatives living in the middle/center mass of their respective Districts, which is one of our mandates. As far as the eastern Districts, Districts 5, 6 and 7, one specific thing that he feels needs to be avoided, referring to City Council Representative Holguin’s statements, the needs and socio-economics north and south of the freeway are different. The way District 6 wraps around all the way from the Mexico border, all the way up past Montwood Boulevard to the north. Diversity is fine but that is really taking things to the nth degree, as far as diversity goes. The current north/south configuration of Districts 6 and 7, defy logic in regard to the mandate to have compactness and to follow easily identifiable geographic boundaries. Even though Commissioners are not to be concerned with future growth, should the City experience further growth to the east, opening District 7 to the east would allow three Districts to acquire new population. Commissioner Graham realizes change is not easy, that there are interest groups for various causes and that there are just good people who do not want to lose their current City Council Representative. But City Council Representatives come and go, they have to. These boundaries that we establish in this Commission will be with us at least 10 years. Commissioner Graham explained he tried to please all the people, all the time but found out that he could not create a map that he could live with that ran District 7 all the way down Alameda Boulevard so that a Special Interest Group down there could have their street run through three Districts instead of two and open up District 7 to the west.

Commissioner Jorgensen appreciates Commissioner Graham trying to lead by example in terms of gerrymandering. That term has been tossed around so loosely and, she believed, so inaccurately. If the DOJ has allowed the City to operate under its current boundaries for the last 10 years, however we may disagree with the shapes and aesthetics, the Districts are not gerrymandered. Commissioner Jorgensen finds taking away the Downtown from District 8, for the purposes of aesthetics and compactness, violates a more important principle, as directed by City Council, which is to preserve the core of the District. Commissioner Jorgensen asked Commissioners Thackston and Graham if they had considered how many people they displaced when the Commissioners moved the Downtown out of District 8.

Commissioner Thackston felt the word displaced was not the right term. He stated it changed.

Commissioner Jorgensen asked Commissioner Thackston if he knew how many he changed.

Commissioner Thackston responded approximately 35,000.

Commissioner Jorgensen stated he had changed 50% of the District which; in her opinion, cuts out the core of the District. Commissioner Jorgensen appreciates all the work that both Commissioners have done since October; however, Commissioner Jorgensen has a strong objection to that. In terms of the diversity, it was quite welcome to hear the diversity being embraced in District 1 because that was not always the comments from the public in the past. Commissioner Jorgensen thought that was something the District 8 constituents would want; not only to preserve the core but to preserve the diversity of District 8.

#### **CD-4 MAP – COMMISSIONERS JORGENSEN AND KARLSRUHER**

Commissioner Jorgensen stated, looking at the CD-4 map, apologies to members of the public who prefer the east/west configuration, regarding Districts 1, 2 and 8. They tried to keep the churn between the Districts as small as possible. As an intellectual exercise Commissioner Jorgensen tried creating a map with an east/west configuration, marrying that configuration with the western side of this map, CD-4.

Two schools of thought regarding the east side:

1. How do you meet the mandated numbers for the DOJ;
2. Yet preserve cores, neighborhoods and identities

Commissioner Karlsruher stated he really appreciates hearing from the public tonight. In the process that Commissioners deal with, representing the public, it is the individuals who will stand up and tell Commissioners what they really think because at the end of the day, sway the way things go. Additionally, Commissioner Karlsruher really appreciates the challenges Commissioners have had from those individuals who spoke tonight and at other Districting Commission meetings. This is one of the best



team building exercises the Commissioner has ever seen. At the end of the day; this is what we have to do. On a positive note, Commissioners' minds are still wide open. Commissioner Karlsruher noted that they are trying, as best they can to bring as much of this Commission together to deliver something to City Council that City Council can deal with. Commissioner Karlsruher felt that the Commission was getting there.

Chair Finke expressed his appreciation to Commissioner Graham for suggesting the interaction with the public tonight. He felt that was a real advance, extremely important and he wished Commissioners had done that in the past.

At this time, Commissioner Graham suggested Commissioners consider selecting at least one of these maps to go to City Council. He asked if that was premature at this point.

Chair Finke interjected he thought Commissioners should wait until after the March 14<sup>th</sup> deadline for submitting maps. Chair Finke asked Staff when the next Districting Commission meeting would be held.

Mr. Coronado responded the next Districting Commission meeting will be held April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Jorgensen appreciates the desire to get closure around the maps. But if Commissioners wait to the next meeting, Commissioners will have:

1. Allowed any further members of the public to submit maps
2. The County of El Paso will also have their final Precincts
3. Will it be possible to adjust the maps according to the County's changes

Mr. Coronado responded, we have the March 14<sup>th</sup> deadline for anyone to submit a map. For the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, Staff would have the new boundary lines from the County. Any maps that Commissioners review at the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will show the new boundary lines. Mr. Coronado felt it was appropriate that, should Commissioners agree, at the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting Commissioners bring with them four or five maps that they would pre-select or support and want the Commission to consider for selection to the City Council. After that is finished, Staff can then go back and adjust the Precinct numbers and boundary lines.

Commissioner Thackston asked why did there was not a meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Coronado responded Staff wanted to give time for the public to submit their maps. Given the experience Staff had with the seven public meetings; it was really tough for Staff to create the maps in that very short period of time.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Graham moved to adjourn.



### **PRIOR TO ADJOURNING**

Mr. Coronado suggested, should Commissioner agree, he will notify the Commissioners that were not present tonight to come to the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting with four or five of their pre-selected maps. Mr. Coronado will speak to those Commissioners this week or early next week.

Chair Finke asked Mr. Coronado if, between now and March 14<sup>th</sup>, Staff could post the new maps on the web site to allow Commissioners to review them.

Mr. Coronado would do that just as soon as the map is created. Staff will also run the numbers and data and have those maps and data ready for the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mr. Coronado will email the Commissioners when that information has been posted on the web.

Commissioner Jorgensen asked Ms. Taylor, if Commissioners come prepared on the 4<sup>th</sup> with our four or five recommended maps and as a Commission we can try and narrow that list down, are we still meeting the timeframe that Staff has for the DOJ.

Ms. Taylor responded it would be ideal if Commissioners spent this time between now and the next meeting, reviewing the over 20 maps we have already; pick some favorites, pick some that need a little adjusting, come prepared to have a real work session in terms of narrowing that down to at least some number that Staff can apply the new County Precinct lines to. So that at the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, Staff would have already made those changes to whatever maps were pre-selected and hopefully Commissioners could make a decision at that April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **6. Adjournment**

### ***MOTION:***

*Motion made by Commissioner Graham, seconded, and **UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.***